

Guidance on External Speakers: On-Site Events and Off-Site Visits

This guidance applies both to hosting external speakers on school premises and to situations where pupils encounter speakers during off-site visits. Schools must take reasonable and proportionate steps to ensure that any speakers pupils hear from, whether on-site or at external venues, are suitable and do not expose pupils to radicalising or otherwise inappropriate influences, in line with the Prevent duty and wider safeguarding expectations.

Hosting external speakers on-site

Through hosting external speakers, schools provide a safe space for students to engage with a variety of issues and hear and debate different perspectives. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that the people they invite to speak are suitable and that all safeguarding procedures are followed. When inviting speakers, schools are reminded of the following:

- Keeping children safe in education is statutory guidance that all schools must have regard to when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. When inviting speakers, schools should be conscious of the safeguarding requirements in the guidance
- The [Prevent duty](#) requires schools to have clear protocols within their safeguarding policies to ensure that any visiting speakers — whether invited by staff or pupils — are suitable, appropriately supervised, and that school facilities are not used in ways that could promote extremist or radicalising views.
- The Department for Education has issued [advice to independent schools](#) (including academies and free schools) on improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils which states that: ‘schools should consider ‘vetting’ visiting speakers if they may hold views which are inconsistent with the requirements of any part of the SMSC standard, and if still used ensure that the content of their presentation is agreed beforehand’
- The explicit SMSC requirement to ‘vet’ visiting speakers is set out in the independent school standards which apply to independent schools (including Academies and Free Schools). Maintained (and other state-funded) schools are still required to ensure the suitability of visiting speakers through the applicable safeguarding frameworks, including the Prevent duty and Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- All schools are subject to requirements to forbid political indoctrination and secure a balanced treatment of political issues as explained in the [Political impartiality in schools guidance](#). This extends to extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised for registered pupils at the school by or on behalf of the school¹

¹ [Section 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996 and standard 5c of the Independent School Standards](#)

- Schools which are charities should have regard to guidance from the [Charity Commission](#), which includes some examples of steps that trustees can take to help them manage the risk around hosting speakers. Other schools may choose to use it as good practice and refer to these general principles, but it is not a requirement
- [Teaching misconduct guidance](#) states that staff are 'likely to face prohibition if they deliberately allow exposure of pupils to such actions that undermine fundamental British values including promoting political or religious extremism by inviting individuals to speak in schools'.

Principles for Managing External Speakers On-Site

When deciding whether to host a particular speaker, schools should consider carefully whether the views being expressed, or likely to be expressed, constitute views that are used to encourage people into participating in or supporting terrorism, or are shared by terrorist groups. When hosting a speaker (either during or outside of school hours) or visiting a speaker, schools may wish to consider carrying out the following research before agreeing to host:

- The topic of the event (including the purpose of the speaker's visit and the appropriateness for the audience)
- The speaker's reputation and who may be prompted to attend, particularly whether the speaker or members from the organisation they represent have a reputation for causing disruption at venues
- Any risks to the school's reputation and ethos
- The status of the speaker, including their previous comments, by carrying out due diligence, which might include speaking to other settings who have hosted the speaker
- When carrying out internet searches, it is good practice to look beyond the first page of results
- Whether you consider there to be potential for speakers to use language intended to stir up hatred or incite violence
- The views of the Community safety team/ local police/ LA Prevent co-ordinator if you have any concerns.

As part of managing the risk of radicalisation, schools' safeguarding policies should set out clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers, whether invited by staff or by children themselves, are suitable and appropriately supervised. In England, the Prevent duty complements schools' other responsibilities for ensuring that speakers do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

When using external agencies, schools in England must be mindful of their existing duties regarding political impartiality and ensure the balanced presentation of

political issues. [Political impartiality in schools](#) guidance explains the existing legal requirements.

Schools should consider these steps for every event that they host.

Letting School Premises to External Organisations

Schools play an important role within the community and will often let their premises to external organisations. This can also be a means of generating additional income for the benefit of the school. The following principles apply in relation both to speakers visiting during normal school hours and to organisations and individuals using the premises outside school hours.

- Schools often let their premises to external organisations, including outside school hours. When doing so, schools should ensure that lettings do not conflict with the school's ethos or safeguarding responsibilities.
- Maintained schools that are under a duty to promote community cohesion must be satisfied that any speakers invited as part of a letting arrangement will not undermine that duty.
- Schools should also be mindful of how their land is held, as this may in some cases limit or prohibit use of the premises for certain purposes.
- Where letting arrangements are managed by a third party, schools should ensure that the provider carries out appropriate suitability checks in line with the school's safeguarding and Prevent-related policies

Schools may choose to set out their expectations and decision-making processes within a lettings policy, forming part of wider premises management arrangements. While not mandatory, such policies are considered good practice and can help ensure that lettings align with the school's safeguarding responsibilities, ethos, and community cohesion duties.

Taking Pupils Off-Site: Managing Speaker Risks During Visits

School trips provide valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in enriching, hands-on learning experiences. In addition to general health and safety requirements, schools must ensure that pupils are not exposed to radicalising influences during off-site visits. This includes taking reasonable and proportionate steps to understand:

- Who will be speaking at external venues or events pupils will attend
- The nature and purpose of the event; and
- Whether any views likely to be expressed could pose a safeguarding risk.

As with hosting speakers on school premises, schools should carry out appropriate checks to ensure that any speakers pupils encounter off-site are suitable and that

pupils are appropriately supervised, in line with their Prevent duty and wider safeguarding responsibilities.

The updated health and safety guidance can be found at: [Health and safety: advice for schools - GOV.UK](#)

Further Information and Supporting Guidance

- [The equalities guidance for schools](#) - explains schools' duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, including how to prevent discrimination and promote equality (see chapter 5).
- [Prevent duty](#) guidance - sets out schools' responsibilities to safeguard pupils from radicalisation and ensure visiting speakers are suitable.
- [Advice to independent schools](#) – includes SMSC requirements, such as considering vetting visiting speakers whose views may conflict with the standards.
- [Teaching misconduct guidance](#) – highlights that staff may face regulatory action if they expose pupils to extremist or inappropriate views.
- [Political impartiality in schools](#) – provides guidance on ensuring balanced treatment of political issues and preventing political indoctrination.